



# IRTC

INTERNATIONAL  
REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL  
COLLEGE  
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## Local Study Center – Gunma-ken, Japan

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

— Philippians 2:1-4 ESV

When we work together, we can achieve much more than when we labor alone. We are part of a people chosen by God to show his glory and enjoy the blessings he graciously gives us. With this in mind, the IRTC has set up a program to foster cooperation between students, by encouraging the creation of local study centers. The idea is that students will help and encourage each other, answering doubts, developing concepts, and providing support to overcome the difficulties that are regularly encountered during distance learning. This group is, in turn, overseen by a local tutor. Thus in August 2020 two local centers were recognized, both in Japan.

The first, in Gunma-ken province, about 150 km from Tokyo, is made up of four students, Christians dedicated to the Lord's work, who strive to learn more about the life and work of our Savior, with a willingness to better serve the kingdom of God. Evanilton Santos, the group's tutor, Vanderlei Toshio, Pedro Ando and Gerson Osawa, got together and put this project into practice.

Pastor Evanilton explains the circumstances faced by Japanese students and the ways in which he expects the local center will help its members:

*Life in Japan reflects the reality of the current capitalist world. Most people work at least twelve hours a day, and often, in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, students miss out on the IRTC's classes and activities. With the Study Center, students share what they are studying at the moment, expose their difficulties, exchange experiences and pray together. At first, we will meet both virtually as well as face-to-face, seeking, throughout the pro-*

*cess, what type of meeting works best within our work schedules. We also created a group on WhatsApp, which we use to maintain constant contact. This group has already rescued some students from problems with dates and times for live classes, assignments, and even final exam deadlines. The opening of this Local Center brings me great joy, as I believe this gathering of colleagues will help us to progress greatly in learning. Distance learning studies are always a challenge, and success can often seem unattainable due to the need for extreme self-discipline and the lack of contact in your own context with colleagues and teachers. In situations like the one here in Japan, where each student needs to reconcile an intense work schedule, care for one's family and service in the church, having friends who struggle with the same difficulties and still propose to walk with you and motivate you certainly makes all the difference. We are privileged to have this group of close friends studying at the same theological school and united to serve the Lord in the local church. I sincerely hope that our initiative will encourage other IRTC colleagues to meet as a Local Centers in their respective regions.*



From left to right, students Vanderlei Toshio, Pedro Ando, Evanilton dos Santos and Gerson Osawa

## Local Study Center – Aichi-ken, Japan

The second group is in Aichi-Ken, in the city of Tahara, about 330 km from Tokyo. It is formed by the following students: Claudiney Sena, Luan Kendy and Márcia Gomes. Dr. Daniel Charles Gomes, the center's tutor, reports the circumstances that led the group to meet:

*The world has witnessed some rapid and substantial changes in teaching and learning practices in higher education institutions over the past decade. Web-based technologies are increasingly used to provide flexible, online learning for both face-to-face and distance learning students. These changes are also taking place in theological teaching academies.*

*When several people from the Christ is Life Presbyterian Church - Japan started at the IRTC, I noticed the need for students to find study partners by forming online groups. But I realized that they needed more than that! Resorting to a purely online solution would simply repeat the recipe indefinitely - distant study groups for learning that already occurred at a distance! Thus, students were introduced to the idea brought forth by the IRTC's Vice-President for Student Affairs: to form a local support group for IRTC students living in our region. Our center, then, was created to encourage discussions and to help students to improve their studies, in the long run. We want to discuss what content will appear on assessments, find solutions to questions which may arise during our studies, share resources and tips to help each other, and provide a support system that encourages interaction with other students. When cooperating with people who share the*



From right to left, students Claudiney Sena, Luan Kendy and Márcia Gomes. Misabel Tanno is part of the intercessors for students from Japan

*same goals, we will certainly be more determined to do our best. The ITSC (IRTC Tahara Study Center) meets in person once a month and, whenever necessary, virtually through Zoom video conferencing. If necessary, I assist students in individual Zoom sessions. We have also begun contributing monthly for the purchase of books required by our courses, to be kept in our study library for future students in our community. We believe that together, guided and encouraged by Christ, we are stronger and more capable!*

## Support the IRTC

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